

Message Text

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11

ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

SCA-01 IO-11 EUR-12 SSO-00 INRE-00 /046 W

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Z 030740Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO USMISSION GENEVA FLASH

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9351

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2908

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, CVIS

SUBJ: ASSYRIAN AND ARMENIAN REFUGEES

REF: GENEVA 2531

1. WCC DE JONGE AND EMBASSY REALIZE HIGH COSTS INVOLVED IN SHIP CHARTERING. HOWEVER, EMBASSY FULLY SUPPORTS DE JONGE'S OPINION THAT BRINGING SHIP TO PORT NOW WOULD INVOLVE UNACCEPTABLE RISKS.

2. AT 0820 HOURS LOCAL TIME THIS MORNING, CONSULAR OFFICER TELEPHONED BASHIR GEMAYEL ONCE AGAIN AND ASKED IF KATAEB'S OPINION RE SHIP MOVEMENT HAD CHANGED FOLLOWING ANNOUNCED CEASE FIRE. GEMAYEL EMPHATIC IN STATING THAT HIS OPINION OF YESTERDAY REINFORCED BY RECENT EVENTS. HE STATES THAT FIGHTING OUTSIDE REPEAT OUTSIDE BEIRUT YESTERDAY AFTERNOON WAS INTENSE. OF GREATER SIGNIFICANCE, HE INFORMED US THAT SOME SHIPS ENTERING OR DEPARTING JOUNIEH HAD COME UNDER FIRE FROM SMALL GUNBOATS. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS CLINCHES THE ARGUMENT AND THAT ANY ATTEMPT BRING SHIP INTO JOUNIEH NOW WOULD BE IRRESPONSIBLE.

3. GEMAYEL DID STATE THAT IN FEW DAYS AN IMPROVED SITUATION MIGHT PERMIT HIM CHANGE HIS MIND. THIS, HOWEVER, WOULD BE TOO LATE FOR THIS CHARTERING.

4. WE NOTE THAT ANNOUNCEMENT OF CEASE FIRE, NO MATTER HOW
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TENUOUS, HAS COMPLETELY CHANGED SITUATION RE REFUGEE MOVEMENT.

FIRST, ATTENTION MORE CLOSELY FOCUSED ON JOUNIEH IN CASE KATAEB SHOULD ATTEMPT USE CEASE FIRE PERIOD TO BRING IN ARMS RESUPPLY AS IT HAS BEEN ACCUSED IN THE PAST. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT GEMAYEL IS CONCERNED THAT REFUGEE SHIP MIGHT BE MISTAKEN FOR ARMS SHIP. SECONDLY, WHILE MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES ACROSS TOWN PRIOR TO QUOTE CEASE FIRE END QUOTE WAS IMPOSSIBLE, BELIEVE IT CAN BE ARRANGED NOW. IN BEIRUT ITSELF, DANGER FROM OPEN CONFLICT BETWEEN ELEMENTS IS REDUCED. BUT KIDNAPPINGS, COMMON THUGGERY, REMAIN A THREAT. WCC BELIEVES IT HAS COMPLETE ARRANGEMENTS, INVOLVING ELEMENTS FROM BOTH REPEAT BOTH SIDES TO PROVIDE SECURE ARMED ESCORTS TO MOVE REFUGEES TO AIRPORT SIDE OF TOWN. THEY HOPE MOVEMENT CAN TAKE PLACE TODAY.

5. IN SHORT, SHIP MUST BE TURNED BACK.
BROWN

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NNN

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